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On Thankfulness.

THE seat of religion is the heart. External actions, whether ceremonial or moral, though the natural expression and proper evidence of our real sentiments, are religious only because they are allied to dispositions and feelings that essentially are so. From them they flow. To them they are indebted for their true and distinctive character. So that, although there is not any difficulty in imagining a person deeply spiritual, though by sickness or otherwise he may be incapable of expressing his feelings visibly, it is a mere extravagance and absolute contradiction to speak of one whose life is religious, while his heart is alienated from God. This truth, though it appears obvious, is of such general application and importance, that it can hardly be too frequently repeated. It is this which an eminent writer of the present day doubtless intended to enforce, when she said, that "Christianity is a religion of principles." It is this which has

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induced the most valuable of our practical writers to enter deeply into the examination of the spiritual affections, of the secret and internal operations of religion in the heart.

Nor is the knowledge of these things involved in doubt or mystery. Christianity addresses, indeed, the most vital principles of our nature: her energy penetrates even to the deepest springs of human action: yet the affections which Religion claims, and the active exercise of which constitutes her perfection and triumph, are all natural affections. Hope and fear, joy and sorrow, love and hatred, are passions so intimately allied to our constitution that they may be said to form a part of our existence; and even from our earliest years they have been so continually in exercise, that the dullest and most ignorant are as well acquainted with them as the profoundest inquirer into human nature. These, however, are the affections which, engaged in the service of Religion, become the elements of true holiness. Whatever, therefore,

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be the mystery implied in those powerful images in which man is described as regenerated and created anew by the agency of the Spirit of God, it is evident that they do not involve any practical difficulty. The change is certainly radical and complete, perhaps not perfectly to be understood by us in its deepest and essential energy; but the effects and evidences of that change are of a nature so intelligible, that the weakest faculties are sufficient to apprehend them. All know what their affections are, and all are capable of discovering to what objects they are principally directed.

It is worthy of observation (though it may appear digressive,) that although some of the affections upon which Religion operates are, in their lively exercise, exceedingly distressing, they are not those to which Religion has any natural or permanent alliance. Fear and grief are doubtless painful; when powerfully excited, they are the sources of the deepest affliction; but fear and grief, speaking correctly, constitute no part of Religion. She is acquainted with them only as grief for sin, and fear of condemnation. They are but as visitants in her kingdom. In heaven they have no place. Their residence is chiefly fixed in that land of mourning which separates the realms of light from the dominions of guilt and misery. Religion, in her perfect state, nay, even in that maturity which sometimes has been attained in this life, knows only affections and feelings which are essentially delightful. Love, joy, hope, gratitude, are always sources of

gratification. In their best and highest exercise they are the springs of happiness refined, exalted, and ineffable.

Among the religious affections, I know not how any can better deserve an attentive consideration than THANKFULNESS.

Yet it is most strange, if, in a world so full of wonders, any thing can justly be called strange, that a creature should ever need to be reminded of the duty of gratitude to his Creator. Our very instincts tell us, that to be unthankful even to an earthly benefactor is the mark of a low and unworthy spirit. What must be the guilt, then, of unthankfulness to Him, who, from the first hour of our existence, has been engaged in an unceasing course of mercy and kindness towards us; whose bounty began before we could even conceive from whom it flowed; and has been continued to us through many years of indifference, disobedience, and ingratitude on our parts? There is scarcely any point of view in which the universal corruption of human nature is so visible as this. The very best are cold; willing to enjoy their blessings, yet in danger lest that very enjoyment should make them forget the Giver. And a large part of mankind have in every age consumed the bounties of Providence in the most stupid selfishness, utterly careless of any thing but how to renew and increase their own gratifications. The wrath of Heaven was poured forth upon the heathen world, because "when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful;" and it is evi-

deat from the numerous and pathetic passages in the Prophetic Writings, wherein the Almighty condescends to plead with his people, reminding them of his early covenant and long-continued mercies, that, of all their varied offences, an hardened and heartless ingratitude was the most condemning.

The truth is (and there are few truths more important,) that the foundation of all thankfulness is laid in humility. A proud man never thinks himself obliged ; and men being by nature proud, or at least exceedingly disposed to become so, are then only affected with a grateful sense of the goodness of their Creator, when his Spirit has touched their hearts, and taught them something of their real unworthiness. A hearty thankfulness to God is, perhaps, one of the most decisive evidences of a soul truly regenerate ; and the most vigorous state of this grace will, I believe, always be found allied to the highest advances in holiness.

It is, indeed, very curious, and highly instructive, to observe, how different are the effects produced upon the minds of men by the dispensations of Providence ; and to watch the secret principles of the heart, manifesting themselves in the sentiments which they express. We know of men, who, in later years, have rejected Christianity as a forgery too flagrant to deceive any enlightened understanding. Several of these, as Hume, Frederick, Voltaire, D'Alembert, Diderot, and others, have passed their lives, upon the whole, in much comfort and satisfaction, sharing largely of the blessings bestow-

ed upon us, and exempted from most of the severer calamities to which we are exposed.

Do their writings breathe a spirit of affectionate gratitude to the Giver of all their enjoyments ? They are almost uniformly destitute of any thankful acknowledgments, and not unfrequently polluted with profane and audacious impeachments of the wisdom and goodness of their Creator : in the midst of happiness, they arraigned his Providence.—And now contemplate a very different spectacle,—not less real, but to every well-constituted mind far less melancholy. Look at the humble and suffering Christian, stretched upon the bed of sickness, and about to be separated, by an unexpected and mysterious dispensation, from the objects of his tenderest affections. Disease of body and anguish of heart are united to overwhelm him. He sees before him nothing in this world but agony and death. Around him are assembled those in whose happiness his own was involved ; whose welfare has been the subject of his daily prayer and nightly meditation ; whom he hoped to have trained up to everlasting glory by his instructions and example. He must shortly be torn from them in the midst of his years, and leave them in a rude and ensnaring world, exposed to sufferings and temptations from which his parental watchfulness can no longer protect them. Yet, in all his affliction, his faith is still unshaken ; his countenance is still animated with a smile of holy confidence ; and his heart still glows with gratitude and love to his Almighty

Benefactor. Such, in every age, according to the measure of their grace, have been the faithful servants of a crucified Saviour.

The motives to Christian thankfulness are as numerous as the mercies we enjoy, the dangers from which we have been rescued, and the blessed hopes which are presented to us. But, as in an extensive prospect, we select some commanding features in connection with which the lesser objects may be surveyed more advantageously, let us confine our attention at present to three topics, in each of which the great bounty and goodness of God are more remarkably visible.

And first and chiefest, as the most high and ineffable manifestation of the Divine love, the foundation and the seal of all our blessings, let us consider for a moment that stupendous dispensation, the gift of the only begotten Son of God ; " who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." In the contemplation of this astonishing transaction, the mind will sometimes stagger as under a weight too vast for its weakness ; and in a mingled transport of joy, and fear, and wonder, we are ready to exclaim, " Are these things so ?" But shall we doubt the possibility of an event only because it proves the love of God to transcend the height of our conceptions ? Shall we imagine, that he who is incomprehensible in his wisdom can be less infinite and immeasurable in the most excellent of all his attributes ? Let us rather yield to the full tide of feeling, in the grateful reception of this inestimable blessing. To a sin-

ner deeply humbled under the sense of his offences, the knowledge of a Redeemer is unspeakably precious ; it is as the sounds of the seraphic choirs that first break upon the disembodied spirit. And the deeper our views become (as, if we advance in holiness, they will continually become deeper) of the evil of sin and the magnitude of our past and daily offences, the more sensibly shall we feel the extent of that goodness which has provided an atonement so infinite in value. Humiliation and self-abasement will be almost identified with faith and love to an Almighty Saviour ; so true is it in the gospel dispensation, that while we seem to sink we are indeed ascending, and become poor in spirit only that we may be rich in faith. Above all things, let us not receive with coldness this " unspeakable gift." To be a little thankful for the greatest of all blessings, and faintly affected with that exhibition of the Divine beneficence which has filled the highest created intelligences with adoration and wonder, seems, if possible, to be a greater affront to our Heavenly Benefactor than the entire rejection of his bounty. The Christian will endeavor unceasingly, by prayer, by contemplation, by the penitent recollection of past offences, by a watchful observance of daily failings, by the sense of present help, by the hope of future glory, by all the resources of nature and all the means of grace, to rally his spirits and renew his strength, that he may appreciate, with an ever-growing sensibility, this great manifestation of the

loving-kindness of his Maker, the highest evidence of his goodness, and the pledge of his promised mercies. If the pressure of his own distresses, or sympathy for the sufferings of others, should for a moment disturb his more settled convictions, he will fly for consolation to that amazing truth, that He whose power and wisdom and happiness are ineffable, "spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all." The pomps, the riches, the honors of this life are for those who desire them. Ours be the language of the apostle; "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." For "we know that we were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from our vain conversation; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." And "worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."

If there be any thing which can awaken our gratitude in a measure at all comparable with the riches of the mercy of God in the great mystery of redemption, surely it is the long suffering and condescension which he has exhibited in all his dealings towards us. Who are we that we should be regarded by the Most High?

Transgressors from the womb,
And hastening to a grave.

We are born in weakness; we are reared with difficulty; we are supported with sustenance day by day like the meanest animal in creation: and every night we must submit to the suspension of our faculties for many hours, that we may enjoy them with any tolerable comfort during those which remain. And yet, in truth, our condition as animals is that of which we have the least reason to be ashamed. It is the perspiration and depravation of those powers which were bestowed on us for the noblest purposes, which is the proper subject of abasement. How have our hearts been alienated from God, and carried away by the most foolish vanities! How have our understandings been exercised to advance every earthly project, while the highest knowledge and only true wisdom were little regarded! I do not speak of flagrant enormities: they carry with them their own condemnation. But is there one among us, even the best, who will venture to hope, that in the course of a long life, he ever passed a single hour which could be perfectly acceptable to his Maker? Yet amidst all our sins and all our infirmities, who is it that has fed, and clothed, and sustained, and cherished us? Who protected our infancy, and guided our youth, and blessed our maturer years? Who raised us from the bed of sickness, and shielded us from a thousand dangers? We are apt to indulge high fancies of our importance, but let any one impartially consider this simple question: Why was I thus preserved? I had offended against my Maker from my earliest years; and he knew that I should

dishonor him by multiplied transgressions, and even in my best days be an unprofitable servant. I had nothing to recommend me to his favor, nor was the continuance of my guilty being of the smallest possible moment for his glory or happiness. "The wages of sin are death :" and my sins have been more than I can number. Why was I thus preserved ? But life is the least of the blessings which we owe to the condescension and long-suffering of our God. He pitied us in our wretched and desperate condition, and opened our eyes to see the light of his gospel. He turned our hearts to obey his will, and made us to taste of the blessedness of his service. He bore with all our provocations, and pardoned our constant ingratitude ; and when we had rebelled wilfully against him, he sought us, and brought us back, and revived again the vital warmth which was almost extinguished in our bosoms. He chastened us for our iniquities, that we might remember and sin no more ; and in the midst of suffering he cheered and comforted our drooping spirits ; and in every situation and under every vicissitude he has been with us and blessed us, and taught our trembling steps to move in the right path, and raised our hearts to love his will, and understand his righteousness, and hope for his glory. Is there in the universe an understanding so perverse that it can hear these things and not acknowledge the loving kindness of the Lord ? Is there a heart so insensible that it can consider them and still be unthankful ?

There is yet another cause for gratitude, which will ever be cherished with peculiar feeling by all who have the happiness in any measure to experience it. Are we sensible, can we entertain an humble hope, that through the directing and vital influence of the Spirit of God, we have made some advances in holiness, and are daily more and more "transformed by the renewing of our minds to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God ?" Undoubtedly the best will always entertain the deepest sense of their own unworthiness, and be slow to be convinced that they have made any considerable progress in the Christian life. But no one, who is diligent to watch the motions of his soul, can be wholly ignorant of the changes which are wrought in it, whether for good or evil : and the deep anxiety which is felt by every advanced Christian to be entirely conformed to the image of his Saviour will make him recognize, with the most lively sensibility and thankfulness, every, even the smallest, indication of spiritual improvement. It is evident, from the writings of St. Paul, that the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit on his heart were the subject of his continual rejoicing and gratitude. He knew them ; he spoke of them ; not in the language of exultation or complacency, but in the deepest self-abasement, recognizing and adoring the unmerited mercies of his God. How should it be otherwise ? Can we receive the best gifts of our Heavenly Father without even knowing that he bestows

them? Can his power be exerted in its most glorious operations, yet leave no distinctive traces of its energy? But the very supposition excludes the idea of a sinful elevation of mind. Humility is the unsailing companion of true sanctification. And consider what it is that sanctification implies. It implies the reduction or discipline of all our appetites; the expulsion of every unkind and resentful passion; the exile of pride and vanity; the mortification of all those affections by which we are powerfully attracted towards the pleasures, the honors, and vain gratifications of this life. It implies the communication of faith and holy fortitude; the diffusion through the soul of every generous, gentle, and affectionate disposition; and such a constant growth in the knowledge and love of God, as shall make us to delight continually more and more in the performance of his will and the contemplation of his perfections; "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The greatest blessings naturally awaken the deepest thankfulness; and what are the blessings which, singly or in union, can be compared with deliverance from the slavery of sin and the communication of a Divine nature. The Christian must feel them, and feeling he must rejoice with grateful adoration. But his gratitude will be rooted in the deepest humility; and he will ever delight to abase

himself, that he may glorify his Heavenly benefactor.

And yet, after all, something must be allowed to human infirmity. For the present, we are unavoidably conversant with earthly things; and these by their frequent recurrence, as well as from the imperfection of our nature, will, especially in early life, very considerably affect our happiness. It is a matter, therefore, both of wisdom and duty to accustom ourselves habitually to consider not only our chief spiritual privileges and mercies, but also our ordinary temporal enjoyments, as flowing from the bounty of God; that the idea of his beneficence may be associated with the whole system of life, and a perpetual spring of thankfulness be cherished in our bosoms. More especially if there are any blessings peculiarly dear to us, to which our thoughts are often involuntarily directed, and which have acquired by their excellence, a just pre-eminence in our affections, it is highly necessary that we connect them, by pious reflections and frequent aspirations of gratitude, with the great Author of all things. Whatever they are, from him undoubtedly they proceed, and by his mercy only are they preserved to us. In themselves, they are but vanity; short in their duration, uncertain in their continuance, and even dangerous in proportion to the ascendancy they acquire over us. Contemplated as his gifts, they assume in some measure a sacred character; they render the exercise of a thankful piety familiar and delightful; and connecting themselves with hopes and prospects

beyond the grave, instead of drawing down the soul to this world, the scene of their infancy, they raise it by an easy flight to those better regions where happiness shall know neither interruption nor anxiety, is without alloy and without end. The image of our Maker, which, seen in its own glory, appears almost too bright for our weakness, when reflected from the blessings which he has given us, assumes a gracious, benign, and endearing aspect. We acquire the power and the habit of committing whatever is most dear to us with a cheerful faith to his parental providence; and see, in his perfect wisdom and goodness, the source, the security, and the consummation of all our happiness.

Enough has been said of the motives to thankfulness: let us now consider the *blessedness* which attends it.

It is certainly the highest excellence of this grace, and that which ought to constitute its greatest value in our eyes, that we know it to be peculiarly acceptable to God. Other privileges belong to it, and well deserve our admiration; but this is its real glory. For God is the only true fountain of honor, and his approbation the only unquestionable test of perfection. Deep, constant, fervent thankfulness has been in every age the service which he has asked, and which his saints have delighted to render. It is a free-will offering, the homage of the heart; better than the most costly sacrifices and oblations. It is a spiritual exercise, the proper worship of a spiritual religion. It is the language of the church

on earth; "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel; bless the Lord, O house of Aaron." It is the language of the holy and elect spirits in heaven; "And all the angels stood round about the throne, saying, blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

Among the incidental advantages which belong to a holy gratitude, one of the most valuable is, that it cherishes a religion full of cheerfulness and hope. It is impossible that we should be habitually exercised in thankfulness to our heavenly Father for his innumerable blessings without acquiring a certain joyfulness and elasticity of spirit. It is impossible that we should frequently exercise ourselves in contemplating the past mercies of God, without seeing in them the pledges of his future bounty. Both these blessed dispositions are directly opposed to that despondency which in seasons of temptation or distress will sometimes come over us like a thick cloud, filling the mind with fearful and boding visions; and this surely is a temper very unfavorable to advancement in holiness. We cannot, it is true, be too earnest to "flee from the wrath to come;" we cannot too deeply feel the dangers of unrepented sin; we cannot be too distrustful of our own most infirm and evil nature; but we may easily, be and generally we are, far too dissident of the power and faithfulness of God: far too insensible of his unspeakable mercy, and pity, and loving-kindness, and of the exceeding great sal-

vation which he has wrought for us. There is something in a low, melancholy, querulous religion that seems peculiarly unworthy of our great and bounteous Benefactor, peculiarly unsuitable to the freedom of the Gospel grace, and frustrating one of the blessed ends for which the glad tidings of salvation were published abroad. It is certainly not inconsistent with a genuine piety ; but it must be confessed to be the very contrast of that generous, animated, and faithful spirit which breathes through the writings of St. Paul, and which appears to be characteristic of Christianity. For "we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father." The Almighty Creator and Governor of all things is no longer, as he once was, "a God that hideth himself." We see him not like the heathen world through the mists of a guilty darkness, "full of sights and sounds of wo ;" not even as the Jew, behind the veil of a condemning Law and a severe ritual, "the ministration of death." Blessed be his holy name and the riches of his mercy in Christ Jesus, we know him such as he essentially is ; "the God of love;"* "the God of hope;"† "the God of peace;"‡ "the God of patience and consolation;"§ "the Father of Mercies and God of all comfort."|| "He hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love

and of a sound mind." "Old things are passed away, all things are become new." "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Christ Jesus." "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loveth us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Nearly allied to the blessing which was last mentioned, and in some measure growing out of it, is another not less valuable. An habitual thankfulness to God is naturally, I believe inseparably, connected with a spirit of kindness and affection towards men. Indeed, it is not easy to understand how it should be otherwise. A frequent consideration of the unmerited mercies of God towards us cannot but exceedingly humble and soften the spirit. At the same time the contemplation of the Divine goodness, so free, so unwearied, so constantly tending to the advancement of the general happiness, accustoms the mind to noble and generous thoughts, to images of order, beauty, and beneficence, which gradually take possession of the soul. It is finely imagined by our great epic poet, that when Satan, in the midst of his evil designs, beheld the lovely bowers of Para-

* 1 John iv. 16. †Rom. xv. 13.
‡Rom. xvi. 20. §Rom. xv. 5.

|| 2 Cor. i. 3.

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dise, and Eve in "graceful innocence" moving among them, he forgot his wicked purposes, for a moment transported and subdued :—

That space the evil one abstracted
stood,
From his own evil, and for the time
remain'd
Stupidly good, of enmity disarm'd,
Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge.

Milton well knew the tendency of the human heart to assimilate itself to surrounding objects, to catch the spirit, and partake the temper, of the scenes which are most familiar to us. In the cultivation and exercise of thankfulness, the soul is habitually directed to God: we live as it were in his presence, surveying the visible expressions of his goodness, and enjoying an increasing sense of his adorable perfections. Is it possible that in the midst of the images thus presented to us, our hearts awakened to gratitude and astonishment at the comprehensive love of our great Benefactor, a sour, selfish, suspicious temper should prevail in our bosoms? It cannot be: the ideas have no affinity; they are incapable of being united. Never yet did a churlish spirit really love God. Never was a spring of holy and grateful affection opened in the soul, without diffusing itself in a full and flowing stream of beneficence upon every surrounding object.

If such, then, are the motives of spiritual thankfulness, and such the blessings which attend it, can we be too earnest to cultivate a grace so highly becoming our condition, and so eminently distinguished by the favor of our Maker. Let us not, how-

ever, forget that how powerful soever are the considerations which excite us to gratitude, how efficacious soever an habitual contemplation of the mercies and bounty of God, there is ONE alone who, in this as in every other branch of the Divine life, "worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure." He is the great agent; nor are his operations the less certain or direct, because they are generally concurrent with the constitution of nature, and move in perfect harmony with the laws of his own creation. To him then let us "bow our knees" with the apostle, in fervent and continual prayer, "that he would give us according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened by his might, by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length and breadth, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God!"

Let us also constantly recollect, that if we are really filled with thankfulness to our heavenly Father, it will be expressed in the manner which he has prescribed as the proper evidence of our feelings: "We shall shew forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all our days." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them," said our Redeemer, "he it is that loveth me." This is the only

sure pledge of gratitude ; every other is equivocal, and may deceive us. For gratitude, like affection, does not chiefly consist in strong emotions, which may be the effect only of a lively sensibility ; but in that settled temper of mind which disposes us with our whole hearts to do and to be whatever is most acceptable to our Benefactor. The faithfulness of our service proves the reality of our feelings ; the delight with which it is rendered is the measure of their depth and ardor. And it is only an evil heart that can find no pleasure in receiving obligations. To a mind renewed by the Spirit of God, and touched with a true sense of his bounty, it is the highest gratification to behold in every blessing the expression of his parental kindness, and to cherish them as the pledges of his unsailing and everlasting mercy. In such a temper the service of our Maker is felt to be what it is undoubtedly—"perfect freedom." Obedience is no longer a condition ; it is a privilege ; not the means of happiness, but happiness itself. And thus the proof of our thankfulness becomes also its reward : God in his great wisdom and goodness, having so provided that the very acknowledgment of his mercies should be the occasion of increasing them, and the circle of his goodness and of our enjoyment be for ever enlarging. [Ch. Ob.

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ancient of all the nations of the east. The rise of the worship of idols and false gods among them was in the following manner. A certain class of people, called Astrologers and Chaldeans, devoted much time to the observation of the heavenly bodies. Pleased with the splendor and beauty of those luminaries, which they were so much used to contemplate, they, at length, conceived the notion that these were animated beings, of the highest order of creation, that they were made by God to be employed as intermediate agents in the government of the world. These Chaldeans, as they were the priests of the people, possessed a great part of the learning of the times, and naturally assumed the office of public instructors. They taught that God was too great to be immediately concerned in the minute occurrences of human affairs, and that the heavenly bodies were illustrious agents employed by him in this important service. From this sentiment, the idea very naturally followed, that the heavenly bodies should be sought to, should be addressed by adoration and request, to act as intercessors in behalf of men, with the infinite and invisible God. The idea of the necessity of a mediator between God and man seems to have been one of the most ancient, and one of the most universal sentiments on the subject of religion, which is found to have existed. From this sentiment, the practice of imploring the agency of the heavenly bodies in the office of mediator, very early arose. This was the first stage of Chaldean idolatry. Error and wickedness are usually

The Origin of Idolatry.

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THE Assyrians and Babylonians were among the most

progressive. Having gone thus far in denying the presence and government of God, they were soon prepared for further advances. The Chaldeans, at length, taught that the sun, the moon and the stars would be acceptably worshipped by the use of images. As the celestial luminaries often concealed themselves from human view, it would be very grateful to them to have their likeness exhibited in images, which could be always present with their votaries, and receive their constant worship. To these images the presence and spirit of the heavenly bodies were supposed to be transfused, and while the devotees were prostrate before them, they supposed that they were worshipping the spirit of the heavenly luminaries, and not the stock in which they conceived this spirit to dwell. This was the Sabian idolatry, in its second stage. In this stage of idolatry, was the religion of the vast countries on the Euphrates and the Tigris, the first countries in the world, in the times of Terah and Abraham. The heavenly bodies were the objects of idol worship, either by direct adoration, or through the medium of images. This idolatry is noticed by Job, who is supposed to have lived near the same period. "If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness, and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand; this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above."—The second stage of idolatry prepared the way for a third. Having adopted the ce-

lestial luminaries, which were, confessedly, created beings, as mediators, and objects of worship; eminent men, who had been distinguished for their services or prowess, were consecrated after their deaths, as objects of worship, and intercessors with God. Eventually, the character of mediators was mostly forgotten; the spiritual being infused into an image was forgotten; deified men and carved images, of "gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device," became the simple and immediate objects of idol worship. Ninus, the celebrated king of the Assyrians, is said to have been the first who enjoined the immediate worship of images. He erected an image, in a magnificent temple, to the memory of his father Belus, who, thenceforward, became the greatest of all the idols of Babylon. In the Scriptures, this idol is usually called Bel. It was in the temple of this idol that Nebuchadnezzar deposited the sacred vessels which he carried from Jerusalem.

The Syrians were a very ancient people, descended from Aram the son of Shem. They had an idol, held in great veneration, called Rimmon. I have not been able to trace his history with certainty; but from the signification of his name, he is evidently of human origin. In the progress of time, this idol became neglected, and, like other nations, Benhadad, a successful king, who lived near the times of Solomon, was deified, and became their most popular object of worship.

The Persians, lineally descended from Elam, the son of Shem,

through all the changes which they have passed, have steadfastly maintained, for four thousand years, the belief and the worship of the one true God. They consider him infinite and omnipresent, not to be represented by images, or circumscribed by temples. Their religion has undergone its changes, but this fundamental principle has never been renounced. They pay, indeed, a great reverence to fire, and to the sun. For they consider fire as the most perfect emblem or representation of Deity; and the sun to be, in an eminent manner, his dwelling-place; but, in no wise, the Deity himself. This nation, on many accounts, is one of the most illustrious in history; which renders this their testimony for the true God, more eminently important. Excepting the religion of the Scriptures, theirs is the most ancient religion in the world, and gives us the best idea of the sentiments and worship of the patriarchal days.

We now proceed to a review of the ancient Celtes and Scythians. These are supposed to have descended from Gomer and Magog, sons of Japhet. The Scythians settled in the northeast, and the Celtes in the middle and southern parts of Europe. This people, as descended from the eldest son of Japhet, the eldest son of Noah, is the most ancient people in the world. In early times, they were distinguished for considerable improvements in arts and learning.—Their Curetes, afterwards called Druids and Bards, paid great attention to these subjects. Aristotle says concerning them,—

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The first Gomerian prince of whom we hear, is Man, or Manus. He is supposed to have been cotemporary with Terah, the father of Abraham. The next was his son, called Ack-Man, or Acmon. Acmenia was

[JULY,

dise, and Eve in "graceful innocence" moving among them, he forgot his wicked purposes, for a moment transported and subdued :—

That space the evil one abstracted
stood,
From his own evil, and for the time
remain'd
Stupidly good, of enmity disarm'd,
Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge.

Milton well knew the tendency of the human heart to assimilate itself to surrounding objects, to catch the spirit, and partake the temper, of the scenes which are most familiar to us. In the cultivation and exercise of thankfulness, the soul is habitually directed to God : we live as it were in his presence, surveying the visible expressions of his goodness, and enjoying an increasing sense of his adorable perfections. Is it possible that in the midst of the images thus presented to us, our hearts awakened to gratitude and astonishment at the comprehensive love of our great Benefactor, a sour, selfish, suspicious temper should prevail in our bosoms ? It cannot be : the ideas have no affinity ; they are incapable of being united. Never yet did a churlish spirit really love God. Never was a spring of holy and grateful affection opened in the soul, without diffusing itself in a full and flowing stream of beneficence upon every surrounding object.

If such, then, are the motives of spiritual thankfulness, and such the blessings which attend it, can we be too earnest to cultivate a grace so highly becoming our condition, and so eminently distinguished by the favor of our Maker. Let us not, how-

ever, forget that how powerful soever are the considerations which excite us to gratitude, how efficacious soever an habitual contemplation of the mercies and bounty of God, there is ONE alone who, in this as in every other branch of the Divine life, "worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure." He is the great agent ; nor are his operations the less certain or direct, because they are generally concurrent with the constitution of nature, and move in perfect harmony with the laws of his own creation. To him then let us "bow our knees" with the apostle, in fervent and continual prayer, "that he would give us according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened by his might, by his Spirit in the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith ; that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length and breadth, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God !"

Let us also constantly recollect, that if we are really filled with thankfulness to our heavenly Father, it will be expressed in the manner which he has prescribed as the proper evidence of our feelings : "We shall shew forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives ; by giving up ourselves to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all our days." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them," said our Redeemer, "he it is that loveth me." This is the only

sure pledge of gratitude ; every other is equivocal, and may deceive us. For gratitude, like affection, does not chiefly consist in strong emotions, which may be the effect only of a lively sensibility ; but in that settled temper of mind which disposes us with our whole hearts to do and to be whatever is most acceptable to our Benefactor. The faithfulness of our service proves the reality of our feelings ; the delight with which it is rendered is the measure of their depth and ardor. And it is only an evil heart that can find no pleasure in receiving obligations. To a mind renewed by the Spirit of God, and touched with a true sense of his bounty, it is the highest gratification to behold in every blessing the expression of his parental kindness, and to cherish them as the pledges of his unsailing and everlasting mercy. In such a temper the service of our Maker is felt to be what it is undoubtedly—"perfect freedom." Obedience is no longer a condition ; it is a privilege ; not the means of happiness, but happiness itself. And thus the proof of our thankfulness becomes also its reward : God in his great wisdom and goodness, having so provided that the very acknowledgment of his mercies should be the occasion of increasing them, and the circle of his goodness and of our enjoyment be for ever enlarging. [Ch. Ob.



The Origin of Idolatry.

(Continued from page 251.)

THE Assyrians and Babylonians were among the most

ancient of all the nations of the east. The rise of the worship of idols and false gods among them was in the following manner. A certain class of people, called Astrologers and Chaldeans, devoted much time to the observation of the heavenly bodies. Pleased with the splendor and beauty of those luminaries, which they were so much used to contemplate, they, at length, conceived the notion that these were animated beings, of the highest order of creation, that they were made by God to be employed as intermediate agents in the government of the world. These Chaldeans, as they were the priests of the people, possessed a great part of the learning of the times, and naturally assumed the office of public instructors. They taught that God was too great to be immediately concerned in the minute occurrences of human affairs, and that the heavenly bodies were illustrious agents employed by him in this important service. From this sentiment, the idea very naturally followed, that the heavenly bodies should be sought to, should be addressed by adoration and request, to act as intercessors in behalf of men, with the infinite and invisible God. The idea of the necessity of a mediator between God and man seems to have been one of the most ancient, and one of the most universal sentiments on the subject of religion, which is found to have existed. From this sentiment, the practice of imploring the agency of the heavenly bodies in the office of mediator, very early arose. This was the first stage of Chaldean idolatry. Error and wickedness are usually

progressive. Having gone thus far in denying the presence and government of God, they were soon prepared for further advances. The Chaldeans, at length, taught that the sun, the moon and the stars would be acceptably worshipped by the use of images. As the celestial luminaries often concealed themselves from human view, it would be very grateful to them to have their likeness exhibited in images, which could be always present with their votaries, and receive their constant worship. To these images the presence and spirit of the heavenly bodies were supposed to be transfused, and while the devotees were prostrate before them, they supposed that they were worshipping the spirit of the heavenly luminaries, and not the stock in which they conceived this spirit to dwell. This was the Sabian idolatry, in its second stage. In this stage of idolatry, was the religion of the vast countries on the Euphrates and the Tigris, the first countries in the world, in the times of Terah and Abraham. The heavenly bodies were the objects of idol worship, either by direct adoration, or through the medium of images. This idolatry is noticed by Job, who is supposed to have lived near the same period. "If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness, and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand; this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above."—The second stage of idolatry prepared the way for a third. Having adopted the ce-

lestial luminaries, which were, confessedly, created beings, as mediators, and objects of worship; eminent men, who had been distinguished for their services or prowess, were consecrated after their deaths, as objects of worship, and intercessors with God. Eventually, the character of mediators was mostly forgotten; the spiritual being infused into an image was forgotten; deified men and carved images of "gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device," became the simple and immediate objects of idol worship. Ninus, the celebrated king of the Assyrians, is said to have been the first who enjoined the immediate worship of images. He erected an image, in a magnificent temple, to the memory of his father Belus, who, thenceforward, became the greatest of all the idols of Babylon. In the Scriptures, this idol is usually called Bel. It was in the temple of this idol that Nebuchadnezzar deposited the sacred vessels which he carried from Jerusalem.

The Syrians were a very ancient people, descended from Aram the son of Shem. They had an idol, held in great veneration, called Rimmon. I have not been able to trace his history with certainty; but from the signification of his name, he is evidently of human origin. In the progress of time, this idol became neglected, and, like other nations, Benhadad, a successful king, who lived near the times of Solomon, was deified, and became their most popular object of worship.

The Persians, lineally descended from Elam, the son of Shem,

through all the changes which they have passed, have steadfastly maintained, for four thousand years, the belief and the worship of the one true God. They consider him infinite and omnipresent, not to be represented by images, or circumscribed by temples. Their religion has undergone its changes, but this fundamental principle has never been renounced. They pay, indeed, a great reverence to fire, and to the sun. For they consider fire as the most perfect emblem or representation of Deity; and the sun to be, in an eminent manner, his dwelling-place; but, in no wise, the Deity himself. This nation, on many accounts, is one of the most illustrious in history; which renders this their testimony for the true God, more eminently important. Excepting the religion of the Scriptures, theirs is the most ancient religion in the world, and gives us the best idea of the sentiments and worship of the patriarchal days.

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the name of a city in Cappadocia, said to have been founded by him, which existed many ages after his time. This Accmon had a son Uranus. Uranus married his sister Ge, sometimes called Titea. The eldest of their sons was Saturn. Saturn rebelled, and deposed his father. Under him the empire was greatly extended. He married Rhea, his sister. A son of theirs was Jupiter. He conspired against his father, drove him from his throne, and compelled him to take refuge in Italy. A part of that country was called Saturnia, after him, in the days of the Romans. Jupiter divided his kingdom with his two brothers, Pluto and Neptune, to the latter giving the maritime parts, to Pluto the west, reserving to himself the east. Mount Olympus in Thessaly was his principal residence. A son of his was Mercury.

Here we have the true genealogy of the far-famed deities of the most polished nations of antiquity. In this scene of wickedness, parricide, and incest, we discover the renowned heroes, who, after their death, were deified by their descendants, and thus became the favorite divinities, not only of the Celtic barbarians, but of the polished Romans and Greeks. This tissue of heathen deities, in succeeding times, by the fancies of poets, by the interest of princes, and by the ingenuity of all their votaries, was multiplied to an indefinite extent. Jupiter became the supreme; and was generally stiled the father of all the gods. Olympus, the place of his royal residence, became the name for heaven. Pluto

taking the western parts of the countries, towards the sun-setting, was called the god of the lower regions. Neptune having received the maritime countries, for his dominions, was consecrated the god of the sea. Many of their posterity, male and female, were deified after their deaths, and were celebrated in pagan worship according to the particular characteristics with which they were distinguished while in life.

We have thus got a strong hold upon the most famous system of idolatry of the Gentile world; such, indeed, that it cannot escape us; for we have it in its infancy. The most celebrated deities of heathen empires, we trace back, till they are found to be mortal men, and men of the most odious, destructive vices. After their apotheosis, these vices still continued to mark their characters, even in the opinion of their most ardent devotees.

A few detached facts will now be mentioned, which may serve to show the estimation in which the mythology of the Greeks and the countries adjacent was held, by some of those who were most likely to know its nature and origin. Cecrops, who founded Athens about 1556 years before Christ, is said to have been the first who deified Jupiter in Greece, and ordained that sacrifices should be offered him. He is likewise affirmed to have been the first who set up altars and idols in that country, and offered sacrifices to them.—Ceres, a noted goddess of the Greeks, was a woman of Sicily, who came into Attica and taught Triptole-

mus, king of Elusis, the method of raising corn, about 1030 years before Christ. At her death, about 1007, B. C. she was deified for this extraordinary benefit, by Celeus and Eumolpus, who instituted to the honor of their new divinity, the Eleusina sacra, with Egyptian ceremonies; which were certain religious rites that were observed with much solemnity. By the laws of Lycurgus, who wished to form the Lacedemonians for a warlike people, the statues of the gods and goddesses were all to be exhibited dressed in armour. It seems that great man considered their divinities, not as possessing any permanent characters, but merely as creatures of fancy or policy, who were to be accommodated to human purposes.—Among the laws of Draco, the celebrated law-giver of Athens, before Christ, 623, we find the following ordinance: "It is an everlasting law in Attica, that the gods are to be worshipped, and the heroes also, according to the customs of our ancestors." The difference between the gods and the heroes, seems to have been that the latter were deities of a later creation than the former; and both were equally deserving of worship, there being no authority for the worship of either, but the practice of their ancestors. Yet he considers the worship of distinguished heroes as beneficial to the state, as a great excitement to meritorious exertion, and therefore enjoins it by a perpetual law.—Of all the oracular divinities among the Greeks, no one was more renowned than the famous oracle of Delphos. Yet Demosthenes

declared of this deity, in a public assembly of the Athenians, "*Pythia Philipizes.*" Meaning that the answers which were rendered to those who went to consult the oracle, were accommodated to the wishes of Philip of Macedonia, and were under his control. The historians of Alexander uniformly consider his great Augur, Antipater, by whom the conqueror affected to be always guided when he announced the responses of the oracle, to be, nevertheless, under his control, and with all his modes of divination, to give such directions and promises as were agreeable to the designs of his master.—A commander of a Roman fleet, finding that the responses of the sacred Chickens, which were consulted with great solemnity, as to the propriety of giving battle to the enemy, did not accord with his purpose, threw them into the sea.

From these facts, which are but a few of a great number that might be selected to a similar purpose, it is evident that the wisest characters of the pagan world had no confidence in their deities; that they considered them the work of their own hands, deriving all their authority from human opinion. They knew their origin, and of course their nature. The legislators and warriors treated their idol divinities with still greater contempt than would be implied in mere neglect, for they made them subservient to their own designs. These facts are proof sufficient, that they considered the origin of their mythology as of no more authority than would exist, accord-

ing to the account of it which has now been given.

This being the case, that the idolatry of the heathen world has had a known beginning; that its beginning was small and progressive; that this beginning was not till the nations and tribes of men had become numerous; we are led, irresistibly, to the conclusion, that, previous to this time, the true God of heaven, the God of the Scriptures, was the only God acknowledged among men.

In the rise of idolatry, we see the clearest evidence of a sense of the true God. Had it not been for such an impression, generally prevailing among men, it is impossible to conceive that they should manifest an inclination to any kind of religious worship. The universal conviction of such an obligation could not have arisen but from the most substantial evidence, making an impression upon the human mind which was not to be effaced. In patriarchal times, when families and tribes were generally distinct; when civil government was very imperfect; when the power of kings and chiefs was greatly limited, the worship of idol divinities could never have been introduced by human authority. If we enquire, how could men, having a knowledge of the true God, run into such errors and gross absurdities? the answer is given us by the pen of inspiration: "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," they "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping

things." The worship and service of a holy and infinite God, was an employment too pure for the corruptions of an ungodly heart; for men under the supreme influence of interest, passion, and the love of sin.—The worship of a Being, invisible and spiritual, was not suited to the gross conceptions of those whose conduct was principally regulated by the influence of the senses. Their objects of worship must be such as they could see or feel; they must be beings whose characters were more congenial to the inclinations of men, than a God who "cannot look on iniquity." The privilege of a written revelation was not enjoyed, the principal knowledge of the true God was retained in tradition, and this was ever varying according to the interests or prejudices of men.

The great variety of gods which have been acknowledged by the pagan world; the facility with which new divinities were constantly added to their number, as well as the characters which they generally sustained in the opinion of their votaries; clearly show that they entertained very little regard for them; that they considered them the work of their own inventions that they were never consecrated by any attributes or works, really divine. The doctrine of Fate, which generally prevailed among the most enlightened nations, at the time when idolatry possessed its strongest power, seems to have been the remains of the belief of the true and supreme God. With all their divinities, it was generally believed that there was a certain impulse in

human events, which none of their gods could control or resist. After receiving the strongest assurances of their oracles, after every possible encouragement of the assistance of their deities, they were frequently compelled to exclaim, "How inevitable is Fate!" It makes no difference by what term this power was distinguished, it was the recognition of a mighty invisible agency, superior to all the objects of their idol worship.

It is observable of the ancient mythology, that it possesses nothing determinate. Their wisest men are no more agreed concerning the number, the names, or the character of their deities, than the most illiterate devotee. Had there been any real divine origin to any part of this religion, it must have been known and established. This never was done, in any degree.

The discussion of this subject might be carried to any extent. Sufficient has been offered, it is believed, to prove that the whole idolatry of the pagan world had a beginning, posterior to the earliest history of men; that it arose from a corruption of the knowledge and worship of the true God; that its origin and support are to be found entirely in the passions and corruptions of man. We have then the highest evidence of testimony and fact, that in the earliest periods of the world, previous to the great progress of wickedness, the one true God, the God made known in the Scriptures of truth, was the only God acknowledged and worshipped by the children of men. The same is the glorious

Jehovah whom we are allowed now to worship; who designed and will accomplish the work of redemption; who, "in the beginning,—created the heaven and the earth."



The Justice of God in visiting the Iniquities of the Fathers upon the Children.

JEHOVAH has expressly declared it, as a part of his character, that he will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. He says, in Exodus xx. 5. "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, *visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.*" This part of the divine character is a matter of stumbling and offence to many. Some, who think they believe the bible, do really at heart consider it cruel and unjust for God to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children—to punish them for the sins of their parents. And infidels, and those who wish to cavil at the scriptures, are often crying out against it as a most absurd, cruel, horrid sentiment; and urge this passage as a weighty objection against the truth and divinity of the sacred scriptures. And if visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children were really inconsistent with the principles of justice, it would afford an insuperable objection against the truth of the bible, which expressly declares, that the Most High does this.

It is proposed, then, candidly to inquire whether "visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children" is consistent with the dictates of impartial justice? And as the inquiry concerns the character of God, and the truth of the scriptures, it becomes highly important.

In pursuing this inquiry, it is necessary, for the sake of clearness and distinction, to explain what is meant by the phrase "visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children."—It does not mean that parents' iniquities, or sinful exercises of the heart, are so imputed or transferred to their children, that they do in fact become guilty of these sins of their parents. This is impossible; for as the actions of one person cannot be so transferred to another as to become his, so it is impossible, that the iniquities of parents should be transferred to their children. This then cannot be the meaning of the phrase: But it means bringing evils, temporal or spiritual, upon children in consequence of the sins of their parents. When God brings any calamity or judgment upon persons, in consequence of the wickedness of their parents or ancestors, and as a token of his displeasure against this; he then, in the sense of the scripture, visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.

This may be illustrated by many plain facts recorded in the scriptures, in which it is evident, that God did thus deal with mankind. A most striking example of this we have in the story of Korah, Dathan, and

Abiram. In consequence of their impious and daring rebellion against the Lord, and as a token of his righteous displeasure against this, God caused the earth to open her mouth, and swallow them up, with their wives, their sons, and their little children. And by thus destroying the children of these rebels did God most manifestly visit upon them the iniquity of their fathers. Achan, who took of the accursed thing at Jericho, is another instance of this kind. His sons and daughters, by an express command from God, were stoned to death with him, in consequence of his sin. The children and infants, who were destroyed when the old world was deluged, and when Sodom and Gomorrah were overthrown by a storm of fire and brimstone, were visited by God for the iniquities of their fathers.—For they suffered great evils, or judgments, on account of the exceeding wickedness of their parents. God also was pleased to permit Absalom to run into such vicious courses, as were destructive to his present and future happiness, in consequence of the wickedness of his father David in the matter of Uriah. To punish him for his iniquity in this affair, and as a token of the divine displeasure against it, God says by his prophet, "Behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and will take thy wives before thine eyes, and will give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun."

And this threatening God verified by suffering Absalom to

rise up in a most wicked and unnatural rebellion against his father, to defile his wives before the sun, and in the sight of all Israel, and in this way to bring himself to a wretched, untimely end. Thus did God visit upon him the iniquity of his father, as it was in consequence of this that he brought himself to ruin.

And both by temporal and spiritual judgments, God, in a very remarkable manner, appears to have been visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the Jewish nation. They were the murderers of the Lord of glory, and daringly imprecated his blood upon themselves and posterity, saying, "His blood be on us, and on our children." They also, with great bitterness, rejected the gospel, and persecuted and destroyed the followers of Christ. From that time to the present day, therefore, the great body of that nation have been visited with very uncommon judgments and calamities. Soon after this period their temple, city, and nation were destroyed, with such cruelty and slaughter, as hardly to be paralleled in the history of nations. Since that time the remains of this wretched people have been scattered up and down in almost every country upon earth.—They have seldom in any country been allowed the common rights of subjects; have often been butchered in multitudes; have been sold in throngs as slaves; and in most nations have been cruelly oppressed, injured, and trampled upon with impunity. In these various ways they seem to have suffered the peculiar vengeance of

heaven. And during all this time, they, as a people, appear to have been under the most awful spiritual judgments; to have been given up to a judicial hardness of heart and blindness of mind.

As the apostle expresses it, "God hath given them the spirit of slumber; eyes, that see not; and ears, that they should not hear unto this day." And although they have been waiting for, and disappointed of, their expected Messias for almost 1800 years, still, as a nation, they obstinately persist in rejecting Christ and his gospel. And thus for nearly 1800 years, God, both by temporal and spiritual judgments, has been visiting upon this people the exceeding wickedness of their fathers, in rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory.

But how can God's dealings with mankind, in such instances, be reconciled with the principles of justice?

In answering this question, it may be necessary to observe, that mankind are all sinners. As the apostle declares, "all have sinned; there is none righteous, no, not one; and the whole world has become guilty before God." And since all are sinners, they justly deserve the curse or penalty of the divine law, which implies all the evils and calamities of the present life, as well as everlasting destruction in the future world. Consequently God may, in strict justice, bring upon any of mankind whatever temporal evils he sees fit, and may take away their lives at such a time, and in such a manner, as he judges

most wise. And if he brings these evils upon them without any reference to the conduct or iniquity of their parents, he does them no wrong. Of course, there can be no injustice in bringing such calamities upon any in consequence of the wickedness of their parents.

For instance, the children of Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and the children which God destroyed in Sodom, were all sinners. They were also creatures, whose lives were in the hand of God, to be disposed of as he saw best. He, therefore, had a perfect right to take their lives, when, and how he pleased. He would have had a just right to cause the earth to open her mouth and swallow them up, or to destroy them by a storm of fire and brimstone, although their fathers had been the best of men. He had the same right to take their lives in these ways, as by sickness—by the burning of houses—falling of trees, or any other calamity. Consequently God did them no injustice in thus destroying them on account of the wickedness of their parents, and as a token of the divine displeasure against this.

And this is always the case when children suffer evils in consequence of the wickedness of their parents. They themselves are sinners, and so justly deserve these, and far more than all these temporal sufferings, at the hand of God. They therefore suffer no injustice, when such calamities are brought upon them on account of the sinful misconduct of their parents.

These considerations render

it manifest, that it is perfectly consistent with the strictest rules of justice, for God, in this sense, to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children.

Nor is it at all less consistent with the principles of justice, that God, in consequence of the sinfulness of parents, should suffer their posterity to fall into such courses of wickedness, as will ruin them for time and eternity. God is under no obligation, in justice, to any of mankind, to restrain their sinful inclinations, but may leave them to their own heart's lusts, whenever he sees it wisest and best. For instance, God might justly have suffered Absalom to run into his wickedness and rebellion, had David never been guilty of adultery and murder—consequently he had a perfect right, if he pleased, to leave him to fall into these, in consequence of David's heinous sin in the matter of Uriah; and as a punishment to him for this wickedness. For Absalom's rising in rebellion against his father, and in this way bringing himself to such a wretched and untimely end, was a very grievous affliction and punishment to David. And as God might, in justice, suffer Absalom to run into sin and ruin, on account of the wickedness of his father, so he may justly deal with others when he sees best, and thus visit upon them the iniquity of their fathers.

And equally consistent with impartial justice is God's treatment of the Jewish nation, in visiting upon them the iniquity of their fathers, both by temporal and spiritual judgments. As

they are sinners in common with the human race, they justly deserve far more than they or any others ever suffer in this life. And God might, in justice, have inflicted all the temporal evils upon them which they have ever suffered, without any reference to any thing done by their ancestors. Certainly then he does them no injustice, in bringing these upon them, on account of the great wickedness of their forefathers: For, if God punishes them no more than they deserve, they cannot justly complain that he treats them with injustice, let what will be the immediate occasion of his inflicting it upon them. Neither is there any thing unjust in visiting them with spiritual judgments, in consequence of the impiety and wickedness of their ancestors. None will ever cordially go to Christ, and receive him as their Saviour, unless influenced by the Spirit of God. Christ himself expressly teaches that no man will go to him, unless drawn by the Father.

All, therefore, who are left to their own natural disposition, will ever continue in impenitency and unbelief. But God is under no obligation, in justice, to renew the heart of a single individual of the human race, and bring them to repentance, but might justly suffer them to go on in sin if he saw fit: Of course, he might, with perfect justice, have left the Jewish nation to unbelief—to hardness of heart, and blindness of mind---had their ancestors never rejected and crucified the Lord of glory. If so, then certainly God is not unjust in giving them up to these, in

consequence of the peculiar wickedness of their fathers, and as a token of divine displeasure against this. It is manifest, therefore, from these considerations, that God's visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, both by temporal and spiritual judgments, is perfectly consistent with the dictates of impartial justice. It would seem, that no candid, intelligent mind could deny it. And not only has God done this in former ages, and in the instances which have been pointed out, but he is continually doing it at present: for it is a part of his character, as revealed by himself, to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children: and that he now does it, is evident from many facts which are daily taking place. Are not children now often, in the providence of God, suffering peculiar evils and calamities in consequence of the vices and wickedness of their parents? How many evils and troubles of this kind are brought upon the children of drunkards, thieves, and other vicious characters? And how many children of such appear to be given up, to follow the vices of their parents to their utter ruin, both in the present and future world? And when God now visits particular places with earthquakes, pestilences, &c. the children which suffer by them are as really visited for the wickedness of their fathers, as were the children destroyed by the deluge, or in the overthrow of Sodom. In these, and many other ways, is God now visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. And his dealings with

mankind, in this respect, are not only perfectly just, but are calculated to answer important and valuable ends. It strikingly manifests his displeasure against impiety and wickedness, as in the instance of Achan, and of Korah, and his company. All that pertained to them were destroyed, as a token of the divine displeasure against their wickedness. God's visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, also affords strong motives to dissuade parents from vice and wickedness, lest it would be the means of ruining their beloved children: and who, that has the feelings of a parent, can think of going on in sinful, vicious courses, when it not only exposes himself, but his dear children to ruin, and tends to draw down upon them the judgments of heaven? This consideration must have great weight with all parents who have any affection for the offspring of their own bodies, and are not callous to all parental feelings.



The Consistency of God's Conduct with his Word.

THE consistency of God's "visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children," with his declaration, that "the son shall not bear the iniquity of his father."

In the preceding essay it has been attempted to shew, that God's visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, is consistent with the dictates of impartial justice. But there is another objection against this

sentiment in addition to the injustice of it, which is, that God hath declared, in Ezekiel xviii. 20. "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father."—This, it is urged by many, is directly contradictory to the passage in Exodus, which teaches, that God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children—and at first view it must be confessed, that there is some appearance of contradiction. But it is presumed, that upon a candid attention to the scope and connection of this passage in Ezekiel, it will appear, that its real meaning is perfectly consistent with the true scriptural idea of "visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children." It is often the case in *good authors*, as well as in the scriptures, that particular, detached sentences, considered by themselves, will appear contradictory, which, when considered in their connection, will appear perfectly consistent and harmonious; and without such a candid attention to the scope and design of writers, we can never understand their real meaning.

To determine, whether there is any real inconsistency between these two passages of sacred writ, it will be necessary to know precisely what is meant by the declaration, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." Can it mean, that no children shall suffer any evil consequences on account of the sins of their parents? This would contradict express passages of the word of God, as well as many plain matters of fact recorded in the scriptures,

in which it is manifest, that children did suffer evils and calamities in consequence of the wickedness of their parents.—Yea, it would be contrary to plain, undeniable facts, that are daily taking place before our eyes, in which we see children actually experiencing the evil effects of the sins and misconduct of their fathers. It is certain, therefore, that this passage cannot mean, that no evil shall come upon children in consequence of their parents' iniquity, as this would be directly contrary both to scripture and fact. Some other meaning must be sought ;—and by a proper attention to the scope and design of the chapter, it is presumed, we may easily discover its real import. These words of the prophet Ezekiel were delivered after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of the Jewish nation, by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. God had visited this people with very sore and distressing calamities—had destroyed them with sword, pestilence, and famine, and sent the remnant into captivity. On these accounts it seems, that the house of Israel impeached the justice of God, and supposed they had wrongfully suffered for the sins of their fathers. It appears from the 18th chapter, that they charged God with injustice.—They said his way was not equal, and their proverb was, “the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.” And, by this proverb, it is evident they meant to imply, that they were unjustly punished for the sins of their

fathers; otherwise it could give no occasion to say, that the way of the Lord was not equal. The principal design of the chapter, therefore, was, to vindicate God's dealings from the charge of injustice, and to shew, that his ways were just and equal. With this end in view, God declares, from the 5th to the 10th verse, “If a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, &c. hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly, he is just, and shall surely live, saith the Lord God :” that is, he shall be treated like a righteous, just man, and shall enjoy that life, and those blessings which are promised to such a character. But says the Lord, “If this just man shall beget a son, that is a robber, a shedder of blood, &c. that walks in disobedience to my commands, shall he then live ? He shall not live : he hath done all these abominations ; he shall surely die ; his blood shall be upon him :” implying, that he shall suffer that death or punishment, which is the just wages of his sin.

“Now, lo, if he beget a son that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth and doth not such like, but shall walk in God's statutes, and keep his judgments,” then, the Lord declares, “He shall not die for the iniquity of his father : he shall surely live.” This promise implies, that he shall be treated like a righteous man, and shall not suffer any evil for his father's iniquity, which he himself has not deserved. Now, the substance of

what God here says, by his prophet, is to vindicate his conduct from the charge of injustice, and to shew, that he will treat every one according to his own personal character, whether righteous or wicked, and will not inflict undeserved sufferings upon any, on account of the iniquity of his parents. He then continues his discourse, and declares, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" that is, each one must be answerable for his own conduct, and he that lives in sin must suffer the consequence of his wickedness.— "The son shall not bear the iniquity of his father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son;" that is, the son shall not suffer any evil which he himself has not merited for the iniquity of his father; neither shall the father thus suffer for the iniquity of the son. "The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him;" implying, that all, whether righteous or wicked, shall reap the just reward of their own conduct. This appears to be the plain, natural meaning of the passage. "The son shall not bear the iniquity of his father," when taken in connection with the scope and design of the chapter, which were to shew, that God's ways were equal and just; and to do this, nothing more was necessary than to shew, that children do not, on account of their parent's iniquity, suffer any evil unjustly, or which they themselves have not justly merited. The connection and general design of the chapter, point out this as

the plain import of the passage; to understand it in any other sense would be unnatural, and contrary to the general drift of the prophet's discourse. But is the idea, that children shall not suffer any undeserved evil on account of their parents' wickedness, at all inconsistent with the sentiment, that God, in consequence of their fathers' iniquities, may bring upon them calamities, which they themselves, as sinners, do justly deserve? Certainly not, for God's bringing deserved evils upon children in consequence of their parents' sins is very far from making them suffer unjustly for the iniquities of their fathers. And as long as they suffer no more than they themselves deserve, they do not bear the iniquity of their fathers, but their own. Neither is God's permitting persons to fall into vice and wickedness, in consequence of the sins of their parents, in the least inconsistent with the idea, that the son shall not suffer unjustly for the iniquity of his father. For those, who are thus left to fall into sinful courses, will never suffer any thing more than they in justice deserve for their own sins, consequently will never bear any thing unjust, for the sin of their fathers. Thus it is manifest, that the true import of the passage, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father," is entirely consistent with the declaration of God's visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children.

The observations which have been made upon this subject may shew, that this passage in Ezekiel affords no proof or ob-

jection against the doctrine of original sin or depravity, as some have supposed. The true idea of original depravity is, that in consequence of the transgression and depravity of the first parents of the human race, their posterity have derived from them a similar sinful temper, and come into existence with dispositions depraved and prone to sin. And on account of their own sinful feelings and exercises of heart, they become guilty, and are liable to the wrath and curse of God. But they are not guilty, and will never be punished for any thing but their own personal sin.

This, it is presumed, is the true idea of original depravity—and the real import of the declaration, “The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father,” as already explained, is, that no one, for the wickedness of his parents, shall suffer any evil, which he himself does not deserve. But is this any way contradictory to the idea, that in consequence of Adam’s transgression, mankind should come into the world with a sinful, corrupt disposition, and then suffer for their own sins, which originate from this? Certainly not: for if they suffer no more than they deserve for their own sins, then certainly they are not punished for the sin of Adam, and so do not bear the iniquity of their fathers—consequently this passage is not at all inconsistent with the doctrine of original depravity. Those, therefore, who bring it as an objection, manifest that they either have mistaken notions of the doctrine they are

opposing, or are ignorant of the real meaning of this passage.

[*Theol. Mag.*]



MESSRS. EDITORS,

If the following remarks are, in your opinion, consistent with truth, please to give them a place in your Magazine.

Remarks on the tenth Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, particularly the 27th verse—“If we sin wilfully after we have received a knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.”

THIS Epistle was written primarily for the benefit of the Jewish nation, and to convert them to the Christian faith. They were as obstinate in Judaism, as the Gentiles were in heathenism. Their religious rites were originally of divine appointment, and they were unwilling to change them for a new dispensation, although it was a more perfect one. Perhaps, the greatest reason was, they did not like the Saviour’s holy character, his laws of spiritual service, and the holiness of heart and practice, which he enjoined on his followers. In the ninth and tenth chapters, the apostle showed them the insufficiency of the legal sacrifices to take away sin. He set before them the righteousness of Christ by once offering himself a sacrifice for sin on the cross. In chapter x. 27. he assures them, that if they wilfully rejected his sacrifice—there re-

mained no other, by which they could be saved. This was the only way and means, whereby a holy God could gloriously pardon the guilty creature, and save him from suffering the penalty of the law, which is eternal death. As the twenty-seventh verse warned the Jews against doctrinal infidelity by rejecting the gospel ; so it warns all, who have the gospel, against practical infidelity, by living without repentance and in the sin of unbelief. Each is alike fatal, and leaves the soul, in the guilt of transgression, unreconciled to God and under the power of such sin, as his infinite holiness requires him to punish. The danger, in one case, arises from rejecting the doctrines of the gospel ; in the other, from a disobedience of the heart, where there is a conviction of the understanding, and a verbal acknowledgment of the truth : in both cases the event must be the same ; the rejection of God, and an unsuitness for heaven.

It is probable, that some persons, when they read the warning, "If we sin wilfully after we have received a knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin," together with the remaining part of the chapter, have been ready to suppose it was pointed against some sins of a very uncommon and extraordinary nature, and singularly criminal in the sight of God. But nothing appears, why it does not, in strict truth, apply to every one who is secure, impenitent, and without a saving faith in Christ. It is true of every sinner, that there is no other sacrifice beside that of

Christ, through which he can be forgiven. The sin of unbelief, in whomsoever it is found, is much more aggravated than any transgression could be, if Christ had not died. Living without faith and repentance, in a secure state of ungodliness, is practically treading under foot the Son of God ; it is practically counting the blood of the covenant, whereby alone men can be sanctified, an unholy thing, and is doing despite to the Spirit of grace, which kindly offers us salvation. In some hearts, the spirit of impenitence may be more deeply fixed, and against greater light than in others ; but in every one, who doth not receive Christ, it is a sin of that nature which may fitly be called treading under foot the Son of God, and treating that covenant, which is sealed by the blood of Christ, whereby only we can be saved, as if it were unholy. Every person who hears the gospel, and still lives without repentance, faith, and vital piety, is acting this perilous part for himself. Whatever his doctrines may be ; whatever excuses he may form for not being a Christian indeed, or on whatever resolutions he may be relying, that he will in some future time make religion his great concern ; if he is now delaying, he incurs all this peril. If this be a true construction of this alarming chapter, we need not go far abroad for instances where its warnings will apply.

Let us, first, consider the knowledge which is generally diffused in our land. Secondly, what is meant by sinning wil-

fully against the truth ; together with some serious reflections on the state and prospects of them who are thus guilty.

No man can be insensible, that our advantages for religious knowledge are very great. There is not one point, that is necessary for eternal happiness, in which we have not been instructed. We know there is a supreme, most holy, most powerful, and glorious God ; who is the Creator of all things, and our daily preserver. We know that he who made and sustains us by his providence, hath a right to be obeyed. His law is made plain to us in his word, so that neither our reason or conscience can deny its fitness. Every one knows he is a sinner ; that he needs forgiveness and must return to obedience, or suffer the pains of the law. The most secure sinner has this general conviction concerning his own state. The security of his life, and his want of feeling on the subject of salvation, does not arise from ignorance on these first points of religion. The being and the rights of God-head over every creature, are enstamped on the face of created nature. His wisdom, justice, and goodness, are daily displayed before our eyes by his providence ; and the whole is confirmed by his word, giving a law for perfect obedience, informing us what he esteems to be sin, and how he will treat transgressors. God has described to us our own sinful natures ; that we came into existence unholy, have departed from and dishonored him, and that his anger rests upon un-

believers : so that, unless they become new creatures, they must be miserable.

Further, God hath given them a knowledge of his grace ; that he hath no pleasure in the death of sinners, but wills that they turn to him and live. He hath himself become a Saviour, paid the ransom—and offers his holy Spirit to assist all in obeying, in accepting his grace, and living to his glory. He hath taught men the nature of holiness and sin, and how he will reward them in time and eternity. These rewards have begun to take place before their eyes, and in their own feelings. A sinner, in the fruits of his own vice, and the pains of his conscience, at many moments of his life, hath begun to feel that which will be his eternal punishment, if he doth not repent. No clearer information can be had, than we find in God's word, and from experience.

As the warnings of God, so also, the invitations of his grace, are the most explicit possible ; and the way of salvation is so described, that he who runs may read. Every thing is done by God to excite feeling, and warn men to live agreeably to this instruction. All the institutions of religion are designed not only to instruct, but also, to awaken, and influence to an immediate and anxious endeavor to obtain eternal life. All the works of his providence, through the world, generally ; all his dispensations of mercies and afflictions to men particularly ; all the reproofs of conscience speaking within their own

breasts; all the action of the divine Spirit upon their understanding and conscience, are designed to instruct and quicken. A knowledge of these subjects is common, and in those who have not repented of sin, and personally believed in Christ Jesus, the delay cannot be imputed to ignorance of their danger and duty, or of the way in which God saves sinners.

It is necessary to take this view of the greatness of men's knowledge, on these first points of religion, duty, and safety, in order to make it appear clearly, that those who have not a personal and saving faith in Christ, are actually sinning wilfully. The words which Christ spake to the Jews are directly applicable to them: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." This is true, not only concerning the crimes of an immoral life; but the sins of the heart.

We will next consider, what it is to sin wilfully against the truth.—Wilful sins are allowed to incur a grievous degree of guilt; but there is a self-excusing apprehension, into which men are very prone to fall, that although they sin, it is not done wilfully. On this account they are ready to acquit themselves; or at least very much extenuate their guilt, and feel as though, for this reason, there was some degree of safety in their present state. I can give no better definition of wilful sin, than the following:—Things done, whether they be exercises within the mind, or visible actions, to gratify our

evil heart, and against a clear knowledge of duty. The heart is the will—It is a man's choice. Things done wilfully, are those which are in compliance with the inclination and choice. So far as the heart is holy, it is free from sin. So far as it is unholy, it is wilfully sinful, or sins of choice, and to gratify its own evil nature. We ought therefore to consider those sins as being most wilfully committed, which are against the clearest knowledge of the truth and our duty. We always esteem such sins to be most unreasonable, criminal, and displeasing to God, which are against the greatest light and evidence of our duty. In strictness of speaking, all the sins men ever commit are wilful. They are things done according to their own choice. Therefore, if we mean any thing by sinning wilfully, it ought to be this; sins committed against great light, and clear evidence of truth and our duty. It is this which aggravates such sins; and in our common language we mark them as aggravated by calling them wilful sins. The clearer the light, and the more manifest the duty, and obligation; the more aggravated and wilful is the sin, the more displeasing to God, the more certain without repentance, to meet his holy vengeance.

It is in this sense, the apostle warned the Hebrews against sinning wilfully. They had clear evidence set before them of the weakness of their sacrifices under the law, and their insufficiency to atone for sin and cleanse the conscience; so

that they could be no more than types of a better sacrifice to come. They had sufficient evidence that Christ was the expected Messiah ; for this was proved by his works, his doctrines, and the agreement of all things concerning him, with what had been written aforetime by the prophets. They knew he had offered himself in sacrifice, by his death. Now, to reject him, under such circumstances, was sinning wilfully, aggravatedly, against great light, and to certain destruction. It was the more aggravated and awful to them, because there could be no other sacrifice ; no other mode of expiating sin. They rejected a divine atonement ; which was practically treading under foot the Son of God. It was practically calling the covenant and the holy blood by which it was sanctified, and through which only sinners can be sanctified, an unholy thing ; a thing of no value and consequence.

Take this reasoning of the apostle, which carried with it such weight and awful import to the unbelieving Hebrews ; and apply it to the case of persons enjoying the Christian means of instruction, and still living without faith in Christ. They own him generally ;—they call themselves Christians ; while they deny him in their hearts. Nothing can be plainer from the scriptures, than it is that they ought to repent and believe. They ought to love God and make him the joy of their hearts, and his service the delight of their lives. They ought to be conformed to him.

trust him, and make his glory their supreme end. They ought not to love the world, and the things of the world ; but to be penitent, believing, meek, submissive, pilgrims and strangers here on earth ; in their afflictions seeking a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. They ought to realize that they are naturally children of wrath, without righteousness ; and to look to sovereign mercy for the righteousness which is of faith in the blood of Christ. They ought to cease their attachments to the world, and by faith live above it, in all things pressing towards the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. All these truths and duties are known ; still, with this knowledge of duty and of eternity, they live quietly ; without such repentance as loathes and separates them from all sin ; without such faith in Christ, as would produce a union to him in the holy excellencies of his nature, and in the enjoyment of the rich blessings purchased by him for all the sincere members of his kingdom ; without that vital piety, which in a flame of love, ascends constantly a sweet smelling savor unto God. In numbering their sins, they do not reckon their unbelief and their want of a saving faith in Christ. For this, which is the greatest of all their sins, and the surest presage of their eternal ruin, they do not feel guilty. But consider, reader, whether there is not guilt in this, and whether it be not among the most aggravated of wilful sins. If such persons had

defrauded their neighbor of a little perishing property, they would have felt themselves guilty; still they feel no guilt in being without a saving faith, and in an unconverted state. To live a single moment, without faith in Christ, is a practical rejection of the infinite wisdom, which from eternity concerted the scheme of redemption; of that love which pitied sinners who deserved their place in the lowest pit of woe. It is refusing that voice which spake from heaven, "This is my beloved son, hear ye him." It is despising that love of Christ, which drew him from the bosom of his Father's glory, to endure the pains of life; to be an imputed sinner; to suffer all shame and sorrow, and to die in darkness and grief. To be a moment without faith and repentance, is a practical approbation of sin, and denial of the goodness of God's law, which Jesus Christ suffered to honor. It is practically saying, there is no loveliness in Christ, no beauty in his character, no gratitude his due, no worship his right; for a soul which feels gratitude, to him, sees his loveliness, or acknowledges his right, cannot delay a moment from receiving him by faith. Such a soul is drawn by all the power of affection to choose him, and to say, "he is my Lord and my God;" whether or not there be any punishment to escape or any heaven to gain, beside the sight of his glory, and the pleasure of serving him; he still shall be "my Lord and my God." To be a moment without a saving faith in Christ is

practically saying, for the sake of a secure life a little longer; of enjoying the world, its gains, its pleasures, and follies a few moments, I will set at defiance all the warnings of infinite truth and almighty power, and if I die in the delaying moment, will try the awful experiment, whether these denunciations of divine anger are to be feared, or can be endured. All this is implied in unbelief, and is the guilt, that sinners incur so long as they have not a saving faith in Christ. Their sin is wilful, committed against knowledge of duty, against warnings of the danger, and every thing which creates an obligation to obey. If there be any who suppose, that their delay is injuring no one but themselves, it is because they do not consider the nature of unbelief. Unbelief and impenitence are enmity against God. They are the overflowing of a sinful heart, against his holiness, against the character of Christ, his law, and his eternal kingdom. In the day when man shall be judged, there will need no other evidence of the exceeding sinfulness of their hearts, than this, that they lived under the light of the Gospel, and did not believe in Christ.

The force of the apostle's warning is in this clause "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." God will forgive only through Christ. There can be no other Saviour to expiate; no other dispensation or means to sanctify, beside those contained in the Gospel. Therefore those who do not receive Christ, must continue unpardoned, condemned, and the enemies of

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God. Their neglect of believing seals their state for eternity. The solemn and awful description, which follows, is neither inapplicable, nor is it enhanced beyond the dolefulness of such a condition. To those who continue in their unbelief, there remains no other way of salvation. There is nothing but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. If he that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses ; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath heard the call of Christ, and would not accept him by faith ? For this is practi-

cally treading under foot, the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant, by which alone we can be sanctified an unholy, or an unworthy thing ; and it is, also, practically doing despite to the Spirit of grace, who, by his influence on the minds of men, is warning them to receive Christ that they may be saved. Let every one, who is conscious he hath not faith, be cautioned, when he reads this chapter, not to think that it was written for some persons, who are more wicked than himself ; but consider it as an exact description of his own sin, and of his miserable condition, so long as he remains, without repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. C. D.

Extracts from the Minutes of the General Association of Connecticut, June, 1814.

At a Meeting of the General Association of Connecticut, at Fairfield, the third Tuesday of June, A. D. 1814 : Present,

Rev. Messrs.	From
Rufus Hawley, Henry A. Rowland,	{ Hartford North Association
Samuel Goodrich, Dan Huntington,	{ Hartford South
Stephen Dodd, Caleb Pitkin,	{ New-Haven West
Timothy P. Gillet, William F. Vaill,	{ New Haven East
John Hyde, Horatio Waldo,	{ New London
Hezekiah Ripley, D. D. Isaac Lewis, D. D.	{ Fairfield West
David Ely, D. D. Andrew Elliot,	{ Fairfield East

Philo Judson,	{ Windham Original
Asa Meach,	
Peter Starr,	{ Litchfield North
Timothy Stone,	
Samuel Whittlesey,	{ Litchfield South
Luther Hart,	
Nathaniel Dwight,	{ Middlesex
Asa King,	
Calvin Ingals,	{ Tolland
David B. Ripley,	
Aaron W. Leland,	{ From the General Assembly of the John Johnstone,
Alexander Monteith,	
Lemuel Haynes,	
Payson Williston,	{ From the General Convention of Vermont.
William F. Rowland,	
	{ From the General Association of Massachusetts Proper.
	{ From the General Association of New Hampshire.

The Rev. Henry A. Rowland was chosen Scribe; The Rev. Samuel Goodrich, Moderator; and the Rev. Dan Huntington, assistant Scribe.

The certificates of delegation were read, and the Association was opened with prayer by the Moderator.

The Rev. Messrs. Starr, Ely, Williston, Monteith, Haynes, Dwight, Gillet, and Lewis were appointed a committee of overtures, who reported the order of business, which report was accepted.

The Associational Sermon was preached by the Rev. Peter Starr, from 1 Corinthians iv. 2.

Communications were received from the Delegates of this Body to the several ecclesiastical Bodies in connection with the Association.

The Trustees of the Missionary Society of Connecticut exhibited a report of their proceedings the last year, which was accepted, and is as follows:

*To the Missionary Society of Connecticut, to be convened at Fairfield,
the third Tuesday of June, 1814.*

The Trustees of the Society beg leave to submit the following Report:—

REV. FATHERS AND BRETHREN,

WE are called to rejoice in the prosperity of Zion. Evidence is daily brightening to show that Jehovah holds the interests of his church in special remembrance. In the midst of the wars and confusion of nations, the glorious gospel, publishing peace and good will from God, is

preached with success. The efforts of God's people throughout Christendom, to send the word of life to the destitute, are increasing continually, while the Lord encourages their exertions by answering all their reasonable expectations.

The prosperity which continues to attend the missions conducted under your patronage, and by the charity of the people of this state, furnishes great occasion for gratitude and joy.

The unceasing and growing liberality of the people of this state, in contributing to the support of missions, you will gratefully acknowledge with us, and devoutly own the hand of him, whose are the gold and the silver with all the fulness of the earth. The amount of the contributions in May, 1813, is \$3275, 90. The amount of expenditures in prosecuting the business of missions, during that year, is \$5041, 81. Thirty-four Missionaries were employed by your Trustees in the course of the year, and sent in various directions, where it was supposed that the necessities of the people, and the prospect of usefulness, called for their labors; and about 600 weeks of missionary service has been performed. No new field of missions has been occupied in the year past. The calls for an increase of laborers, in the fields already occupied by the Society, were too great to suffer much attention to other destitute regions. Continual experience teaches the importance of attending to the societies already formed, and the churches organized, until they are able, by great exertions, to help themselves. And this they do with fidelity, wherever due attention has been paid to them by the Missionary Society.

The Missionaries have faithfully and laboriously performed their tours of service. They have been frequently called to be with the sick and the dying, as the epidemic, which has prevailed in many places of the northern and western parts of the United States, affected most of the settlements which they visited. They have, as usual, paid particular attention to schools, to visit them for the purpose of giving advice, on the subject of education, and to afford suitable instruction to the children and youth. The distribution of small tracts, enforcing practical godliness, together with other religious books, and the circulation of the holy scriptures, accompanying these gifts with suitable advice, have formed an important part of their service. 2488 tracts and books of various descriptions, on the subject of religion, have been thus distributed; and 348 Bibles, which were presented for that purpose by the Connecticut Bible Society, have been circulated. The Society, together with all the friends of the Redeemer and of his cause, will unite with us, in praise to God our Saviour, for his gracious smiles on the institution, in the outpouring of his holy Spirit, on places visited by our Missionaries; and in preserving the lives and health of these laborers, so that they have not been materially interrupted in their labors in any instance. We are called particularly to notice these things, and to render thanks to Almighty God, because a spirit of warfare, which is invariably hostile to godliness, has so much pervaded our frontiers; and because vast numbers have died of the epidemic in places where the Missionaries preached, and many of whom were personally visited by them. While we make known these causes for thankfulness and praise to the great Head of the church, and feel the encouragement they afford, we must add that all the missionary efforts of this Society, and similar institutions in the United States, although they have been much increased in a few years, furnish but a small proportion of that assistance to the destitute which is seen to be necessary, and which is desired by the people. Respecting the disposition of the people in general to receive Missionaries, and to hear the gospel, it is saying but little of the truth to observe that preachers are cordially received, and their preaching meets with a respectful attention. There is a prevailing desire in the destitute to hear the gospel. Missionaries are invited—are intreated to come and help them. From many places, urgent requests for assist-

ance are sent to your Trustees. Those who are sent out to preach the gospel to them, behold the extensive field before them, feel the insufficiency of their number, and desire that more may come over to their help. Thousands implore assistance in vain, because the ability of the Society is unequal to it.

Copies of our annual account of missions, for the members of the Missionary Society, accompany this report. In this account the particulars of missionary service are given. To the narrative of missions is subjoined the reports of Messrs. John F. Schermerhorn and Samuel J. Mills, who were mentioned in our narrative for the year 1812, as Missionaries whose particular object was to obtain a more extensive and correct knowledge of the religious state of our frontier settlements. The information they have obtained respecting the religious and moral state of the country in general, through which they travelled, is as valuable to missionary institutions, as it is interesting to our feelings. They abundantly confirm the statement, so often repeated, that the people of this land, not only in the newly inhabited wilderness, but in regions which have been cultivated for near a century, are miserably destitute of religious instruction. In the cultivation of the soil, in wealth, in population, and in vice, they are old; but alas, through neglect in morals and religion, they resemble the rude, infested, and noxious wilderness. The whole tract of country, through which these Missionaries passed, contains about a million and an half of inhabitants, who are almost wholly destitute of the stated ministry of the gospel. The wildest dreams of fanaticism, the most fascinating errors leading to perdition, and the unwearied labors of Satan transformed into an angel of light, are hurrying thousands to ruin. We feel for them, and trusting in him who has hitherto helped us, we have appointed the following fields for missionary labor in this tract of country, viz. The state of Kentucky, the Missouri Territory, and the state of Louisiana.

Applications have been made for suitable men for these places, and there is a prospect of soon supplying at least one of these fields. The necessities of these destitute regions have not been hitherto felt by those who are desirous to devote themselves to the cause of missions; but they are now beginning to excite attention. We pray the Lord of the harvest would raise up laborers, and send them forth to occupy these fields. Oh, that he would stir up those who are qualified to come forth with pity for these sufferers, saying "Here am I, send me." The members of the Society, together with all who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth, will unite with us in these supplications to Almighty God, that the light of salvation may fill our land; that religion pure and undefiled may prevail, in those darkened corners which are now the habitations of cruelty; and that our country may be filled with righteousness and peace.

May the presence of Almighty God be with you in all your deliberations, and may his blessing rest upon you, and upon all your counsels for the promotion of Zion's welfare.

In the name of the Trustees,

ABEL FLINT, *Secretary.*

HARTFORD, May 11, 1814.

The following persons were chosen Trustees of the Missionary Society of Connecticut, for one year from the first Wednesday of August next, viz. The Hon. John Treadwell, the Hon. Asher Miller, the Hon Aaron Austin, the Hon. Jonathan Brace, Enoch Perkins, Esq. David Hale, Esq. the Rev. Messrs. Nathan Perkins, D. D. Samuel Nott, Calvin Chapin, Moses C. Welch, D. D. Andrew Yates, and Samuel Goodrich.

Andrew Kingsbury, Esq. was chosen Treasurer, and the Rev. Abel Flint, Auditor of the Missionary Society of Connecticut, for one year from the first Wednesday of August next.

The account of the Treasurer of the General Association was accepted and approved.

Voted, That the 9th Article of a Vote passed at Norfolk, in June, 1800—viz. “That some time in the month of May, annually, the Treasurer’s account shall be audited, &c.” be thus altered, viz. “That some time in the month of June, annually, previous to the third Tuesday, the Treasurer’s account, &c.”

The Rev. Abel Flint was chosen Treasurer, and the Rev. Andrew Yates, Auditor of the General Association, for the year ensuing.

Voted, That to morrow, at 2 o’clock P. M. the Association will attend to an enquiry respecting the state of religion within its limits, and the limits of the several ecclesiastical Bodies in its connection; and that Messrs. Elliot, Haynes, Dwight, Johnstone, and Waldo be a Committee to prepare an account of the same, from the narratives which shall be given, to be reported to this Body.

The Rev. Messrs. Heman Humphrey, Royal Tyler, and Samuel Merwin were chosen Delegates to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, to convene in Philadelphia, the third Thursday of May, 1815; and the Rev. Messrs. John Marsh, D. D. Daniel Smith, and Jonathan Miller were appointed their substitutes.

The Rev. Ephraim T. Woodruff was chosen Delegate to the General Convention of Vermont, to meet at Woodstock, the second Tuesday of September next; and the Rev. William L. Strong was appointed his substitute.

The Rev. Messrs. Aaron Hovey and Saul Clark were chosen Delegates to the General Association of Massachusetts Proper, to convene the fourth Tuesday of June, 1815; and the Rev. Messrs. Andrew Elliot and Bennet Tyler were appointed their substitutes.

The Rev. Messrs. Thomas Robbins and Ludovicus Weld were chosen Delegates to the General Association of New Hampshire, to convene at Hanover, the third Tuesday of September next; and the Rev. Messrs. Samuel Whittlesey and Timothy P. Gillet were appointed their substitutes.

Voted, To attend a prayer meeting to morrow morning, at 6 o’clock, in the meeting house.

WEDNESDAY, June 22.

Voted, That the Committee appointed “to compose or collect some suitable forms of prayer, for the use of families and others, &c.” be discharged from any further attention to the subject.

The following persons were appointed to certify the regular standing of preachers travelling from this into other parts of the

United States, viz. Rev. Messrs. Nathan Perkins D. D. William Robinson, Benjamin Trumbull, D. D. Matthew Noyes, Joseph Strong, D. D. Isaac Lewis, D. D. David Ely, D. D. Moses C. Welch, D. D. Samuel J. Mills, Lyman Beecher, Frederic W. Hotchkiss, and Nathan Williams, D. D.

The following persons were chosen receivers of money in their several Associations, for the Treasury of the General Association viz. Rev. Messrs. Henry A. Rowland, William Robinson, Samuel Merwin, Timothy P. Gillet, Samuel Nott, Roswell R. Swan, Elijah Waterman, Ludovicus Weld, Charles Prentiss, Joshua Williams, David D. Field, and Ephraim T. Woodruff.

The Rev. Daniel Smith was appointed to preach the *Concio ad Clerum*, at the commencement in New Haven, in September next.

The Committee appointed "to prepare a summary account of the state of religion, &c." made a report which was accepted as follows :

The Committee, appointed to report concerning the state of religion within the limits of the General Association, and the Churches in connection with us, beg leave to state,

THAT from the account given by Hartford North Association it appears that they have 19 churches 3 of which are vacant. The churches are harmonious. No new errors have disturbed their peace the past year. Upon the city of Hartford, the first and second societies in East Hartford, and upon the society in Simsbury, the Spirit of God has descended in copious effusions. The attention to religion in these several places still continues.

The Association of Hartford South reported, that they consist of 13 churches, 1 vacant. In Wethersfield an attention to the great concerns of the soul has extended generally over the society, many have hopefully been brought into the kingdom, and many are yet making the anxious inquiry, "What shall I do to be saved?"

The Association of New Haven West reported, that they consist of 20 churches, 3 of which are vacant. They lament that during the last year there has been no general revival of religion in any of their churches. Eagerness in the pursuit of temporal things is apparent among them, while the multitude are asleep with respect to their immortal interest. Yet there are some things to comfort the friends of Zion. Worshipping assemblies are as full as usual, and in some societies individuals have been awakened and hopefully converted to God.

The delegates of New Haven East Association reported, that they consist of 13 churches, 1 of which is vacant. The churches are generally harmonious, and no new heresies or errors have prevailed. Although they have to lament a declension of zeal in those societies, where, within a few years past, revivals have existed, yet much precious fruit of those revivals remains. Religious conferences are frequent, in most of the societies, and special meetings for prayer are attended in several of them. A number of Moral Societies have been formed for the suppression of immoralities—particularly Sabbath-breaking, intemperance, and profane swearing; whose exertions have, in many instances, been attended with desirable success.

The Association of Fairfield West reported, that they consist of 16 churches, 4 of which are vacant. There has been no extensive revival of religion within their limits the past year, but a more than ordinary attention to the preached word. Prayer-meetings have been generally well attended, and pastoral visits well received.

The Association of Fairfield East reported, that they consist of 13 churches, 4 of which are vacant. An attention to Christian discipline in particular churches has been followed by the most happy effects; it has awakened a spirit of brotherly love, and a spirit of prayer. The state of religion now, it is thought, is more favorable than at the last meeting of the General Association.

The delegates of the Association of New London reported, that they consist of 17 churches, of which 3 are vacant; that the churches are in peace, and that generally there has been a usual attention to the ministrations of the word; that pleasing revivals have been experienced in a few places; and that although the profanation of the Sabbath, and the intemperate use of spirituous liquors have been prevalent, yet exertions have been made, which have evidently been efficacious, in checking these immoralities.

The delegates from the Association of Middlesex reported, that they consist of 16 churches, 3 of which are vacant; that in general there is a good degree of harmony and peace among them. That there has been, during the year past a special attention to religion in some places and some additions to the churches. That recent instances of awakening have taken place, which have had a happy influence on the state of morals. Greater attention to the Sabbath is paid than formerly. Exertions are made in some places to suppress vice, and to promote morality.

The delegates from the Association of Tolland reported, that they consist of 15 churches. They have to lament, that stupidity, and indifference to the things of religion, are too prevalent among them, and but few additions to the churches have taken place the present year. But they think there is an increasing attention to the Sabbath and to the institutions of the gospel. Moral Societies are forming for the suppression of vice which have been productive of good effects. There have been revivals in some places. At North Coventry the work has been great—37 were added to the church in one day.

The delegates from Windham Original Association reported, that they consist of 20 churches, of which 3 are vacant; that in many of their societies, particularly in Ashford, Thompson, and Killingly there have been very refreshing showers of divine grace, which have produced considerable additions to the churches, and that generally within their limits, there are favorable appearances with regard to a reformation of morals.

The Association of Litchfield North reported, that they consist of 19 churches, 4 of which are vacant. In Goshen, North Canaan, and Torrington there have been revivals the past year; but they have not been extensive. The churches are generally walking in the order of the gospel.

The delegates from Litchfield South reported, that they consist of 16 churches, 3 of which are vacant. Successful efforts have been made the past year within their limits, for the suppression of vice, and the state of morals in many places has been improved. There has been an uncommon attention to religion in Litchfield, South Farms and Milton: the good work is still progressing.

On the whole, the cause of godliness in our state is, as we believe, advancing. The General Association are happy to hear that the borders of Zion have been enlarged; that successful efforts have been made for the suppression of vice, and that many places have experienced a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The smiles of divine providence upon measures that have been taken the past year, for the suppression of the sins of intemperance and Sabbath breaking in particular, are an encouragement to increased and persevering efforts. Much has been done, yet much remains to be done. The observance of the Sabbath and the preservation of our moral and religious institutions are inseparably united. That the Sabbath is still profaned among us, by journeying,

and by unnecessary labor, should fill us with fearful apprehension.—“ Shall I not visit for these things, saith the LORD?” These violations of the Sabbath call upon the ministers of Christ and others, to arise, and with Christian prudence to contend with the transgressors of the holy commandment, saying, “ What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day, and bring more wrath upon Israel?”

The power and the grace of God, signally manifested in revivals in different places, call for our united tribute of praise to the giver of every good gift. The LORD has turned “ the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.” The friends of Zion are ready to say, it is the LORD’s doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. How precious the souls redeemed from the power of sin! How high their privilege, to trust and praise him who has guided their feet into the way everlasting! Let the followers of Jesus unite their petitions to the throne of grace for more copious effusions of the Spirit, and that God would build the waste places of Zion. Are there no flocks scattered as sheep without a shepherd? Where the gospel is stately preached, are there not many who forsake the assembling of themselves together: many, who, though they profess to know the truth, “ obey not the gospel of our LORD Jesus Christ?”

From the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church we learn that although coldness and indifference are still too prevalent in some places, yet that in others, there have been pleasing revivals of religion the past year. “ On the whole,” as the General Assembly observe “ the cause of religion and morality has been signally advanced the year past. Notwithstanding all the sin and wretchedness of our world; the past year has been a year of joy to our churches. The Lord seems to have come out of his place, to redeem Zion with judgments, and her converts with righteousness.” In the establishment of a Theological Seminary at Princeton, an important step has been taken towards supplying destitute flocks with pastors.

It appears that in Vermont, there have been unhappy divisions in some churches; but the friends of Zion are encouraged with the hope that a spirit of harmony is returning. There is a happy union of sentiment among the ministers. The Bible Society in that state is in a flourishing condition. Moral Societies are forming in some places. In Pawlet and Bridgeport, there have been extensive revivals of religion the year past.

We learn from the General Association of Massachusetts, that there have been revivals of religion in some parts of the state, and particularly in the western counties. Moral Societies have been formed in various places, and have been successful in their efforts for the suppression of vice.

In New-Hampshire the ways of Zion mourn. Some parts of that state have been convulsed by errors and heresies, yet the churches are not without indications of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Sectarian influence is on the decline, and there is an uncommon spirit of prayer among many ministers and private Christians.

May the ministers of Christ every where engage with renewed zeal in the service of their LORD, and may Christ Jesus by his Spirit, go forth from conquering to conquer.

Voted, That the next meeting of the General Association be at Danbury, at the house of the Rev. William Andrews, the third Tuesday of June, 1815, at 11 o’clock, A. M.

After a prayer by the Rev. John Johnstone, adjourned, sine die.

HENRY A. ROWLAND, } Scribes.
DAN HUNTINGTON, } §

*Extract of a letter from the Rev. Ard Hoyt, a Missionary from Connecticut, dated Kingston, Penn. March 12th, 1814.**

"WHILE on my mission, I have in no instance met with open opposition; and even where the people have been least disposed to attend to preaching, I have been treated with respect, and invited to visit them again. In most instances, I have been received with great cordiality, many thanks to the Missionary Society have been expressed, and in most places, I have found a very respectable portion of the people ready to attend preaching at any time, and on short notice. The real friends of truth are doubtless few in number, yet I think there are some of these, in almost every place. And we indulge the hope, that, if the means are used, the Lord will soon plant other churches in this county, as he has in the counties above. He works by means, yet when and where he pleases.

"I think it is impossible to give the people of Connecticut a full and clear understanding of the great things which God has done through their means in this part of the country. Our whole Association, which has been raised up within a few years, owes its existence, under God, to their instrumentality. They have been the means of pulling the people back from the very verge of heathenism.

"We are much in want of books, particularly of Bibles and Catechisms. I have had some Testaments from Philadelphia; and a

few Bibles, Tracts, and Primers, from New-York. The distribution of these has led to a more full discovery of the wants of the people. The Bibles, Primers, and even Tracts, that I have carried out, have been seized with eagerness.—I thought I had made an arrangement to supply the destitute poor, at least with Bibles, and gave out word to that effect. But to my unspeakable regret, my resources have come short. If the Missionary Society, or the Connecticut Bible Society, can furnish us with a box of Bibles, Primers, and Tracts, and send them to New-York, we can get them with convenience; and it would be an inestimable service to this ignorant people. Emerson's Primers are preferred."



Extract from the journal of Rev. Simeon Woodruff, Missionary in New Connecticut, dated Tallmadge, Ohio, March 15, 1814.

"RODE to Canton, and preached in the evening. Canton is the shire town of Stark County, lying off the reserve.* It is said there is not at present a single school of any kind in the whole county; containing six or eight thousand inhabitants; certainly not but one."



OBITUARY.

DIED, at Boston, Hon. ROBERT TREAT PAINE, aged 84.

At Hudson, (N. Y.) HEZEKIAH L. HOSMER, Esq. aged 49, recorder of that city, and formerly Member of Congress from the county of Columbia.

At Wiscasset, (Me.) Hon. SAMUEL SEWELL, aged 56, Chief Justice of Massachusetts.

In Oswego, (N. Y.) STEPHEN MACK, Esq. aged 49, Editor of the

* Kingston is on the Susquehanna River, in the tract of country formerly called Wyoming. The field of Mr. Hoyt's missionary labors was between Kingston and the northern line of Pennsylvania, on both sides of the river, including an extensive territory. EDS.

† Mr. Hoyt has a parochial charge, for a part of the time, at Kingston.

* Adjoining New Connecticut on the south.

American Farmer, and first Judge of Broome County.

In Rochester the Rev. JONATHAN MOORE, aged 75.

In Courtlandt, (N. Y.) the Hon. PIERRE VAN COURTLANDT, aged 94 years—He had sustained many and high offices from the first dawn of the Revolution—had been Lt. Governor of New York, and was the friend and confidant of *George Clinton*.

In England, ROBERT DIGBY, Esq. Admiral of the Red.

In Porterdale, (Eng.) Rev. JOHN MNYSON, aged 90 years.

In St. Johns, (N. B.) in the 76th year of his age, Hon. WILLIAM

HAZEN, a Member of the Executive Council, from the formation of that Province in 1783.

In France, of his wounds, Gen. FORESTIER, a prisoner to the allies.

In England, Maj. Gen. Sir JOHN DOUGLAS, the heroic defender of Acre, and the conqueror of El Arich, in Palestine and Egypt.

In England, ALEXANDER CUMMING, Esq. F. R. S. and an eminent professor of Mechanical science.—Also, Rev. S PALMER,—at the sale of whose books, the pulpit Bible of the celebrated *John Bunyan*, was purchased by Mr. Whitbread, M. P. at the price of 20 guineas!

Donations to the Missionary Society of Connecticut.

1814.

June 17.	From Rev. Samuel Sargeant, collected in new settlements,	\$ 14 26
25.	From a Friend of Missions, South East, New-York,	5 00
30.	From Rev. John Seward, collected in new settlements,	23 00
		\$ 42 26

Received by P. W. Gallaudet for Foreign Missions.

1814.

May 21.	By the hands of P. B. Gleason & Co. from a friend to Missions in Hartford,	\$ 3 00
June 17.	From the Rev. Gideon Burt, of Long Meadow, Massachusetts, to be applied to the translations of the Scriptures,	30 00
		\$ 33 00